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NOTES AND COMMENTS.

I.

RAW MATERIAL OF RHETORIC.

At New Haven, Conn., Mr. Mills at the close of his speech was asked why it was if free raw material would enable us to supply the markets of the world, we did not already do it with cotton goods? Mr. Mills, not having any other answer ready, is said by the unvarnished press to have advanced to the front and replied, "You go home, my friend, and soak yo' head." This, however, Mr. Mills is said to deny, and to asseverate that his real reply was, "You go home and take a cold bath." Either reply could hardly be regarded as within the strict domain of political economy, but supposing that newspapers were not as inaccurate as they are, and supposing also that Mr. Mills had not denied the original version, which version should you say had the greater internal evidence to back it up?

O. E. JACKSON.

II.

THREE GREAT EPIDEMICS.

Now, when the nation gazes with watchful and sympathetic eyes at stricken Florida, and generous hands are giving aid to the sick and suffering, it will not be out of place to turn back the pages of history and consider how, in the past, the sad old world has been ravaged by plagues and epidemics. Death and disease have been rampant always, but at special times special causes have predisposed humanity to some one sickness, which then seems to have raged until it died for want of victims.

From a book not generally known, Hecker's "Epidemics," I have condensed an account of the three great plagues which visited Europe during the middle ages.

THE BLACK DEATH.

One of the most memorable of the epidemics of the middle ages was a great pestilence in the fourteenth century, which devastated Asia, Europe, and Africa. It was an Oriental plague, marked by inflammatory boils and tumors of the glands such as break out in no other febrile disease. On account of these boils and from the black spots (indicative of putrid decomposition) which appeared upon the skin, it has been generally called the Black Death.

The symptoms were many, though all were not found in every case. Tumors and abscesses were found on the arms and thighs of those affected, and smaller boils on all parts of the body; black spots broke out on all parts of the skin, either single, united, or confluent. Symptoms of cephalic affection were frequent; many patients became stupified and fell into a deep sleep, losing also their speech from

palsy of the tongue ; others remained sleepless, without rest. The fauces and tongue were black, and as if suffused with blood. No beverage would assuage the burning thirst. Contagion was evident, for attendants caught the disease from their relations and friends. Still deeper sufferings, however, were connected with this pestilence : the organs of respiration were seized with a putrid inflammation, blood was expectorated and the breath diffused a pestiferous odor.

The plague spread with the greater fury, as it communicated from the sick to the healthy, contact with the clothes or other articles which had been used by the infected induced the disease, and even the breath of the sick, who expectorated blood, caused a contagion far and near. As it advanced, not only men but animals fell sick and expired.

In England the plague first broke out in the county of Dorset, whence it advanced through the counties of Devon and Somerset to Bristol, and thence reached Gloucester, Oxford and London. Probable few places escaped, perhaps not any, for the annals of contemporaries report that throughout the land only a tenth part of the inhabitants remained alive.

From England the contagion was carried by a ship to Norway, where the plague broke out in its most frightful form, with vomiting of blood; and through out the whole country spared not one-third. The sailors found no refuge on their ships, and vessels were often seen drifting on shore whose crews had perished to the last man.

It is hard to measure the mortality of the Black Death; some numerical statements are not, indeed wanting, but they are scarcely credible when we consider the civilization or lack of civilization of the Fourteenth Century. Rudeness was general. Witches and heretics were burned alive—wild passions, severity and cruelty everywhere predominated. Human life was but little regarded.

Cairo lost daily, when the plague was raging with its greatest violence, from 10,000 to 15,000. In China more than thirteen millions are said to have died. India was almost wholly depopulated. Tartary and the Tartar kingdom of Kaptschak, Mesopotamia, Syria, Armenia, were covered with dead bodies. Cyprus lost almost all its inhabitants, and ships without crews were seen driving about the Mediterranean, spreading the plague where they went ashore. It was reported to Pope Clement, at Avignon, that throughout the East (probably excepting China) 23,840,000 people had fallen victims to the plague. In Venice 100,000 died, and in London at least the same number; while 124,434 Franciscan friars died in Germany.

In Avignon the Pope found it necessary to consecrate the Rhone, that bodies might be thrown into the river without delay. In Vienna, where for some time twelve hundred inhabitants died daily, the interment of corpses in the church yards and within the churches was prohibited, and the dead were arranged in layers by thousands in large pits outside the city, as had been already done at Cairo, and Paris, and London.

The palace and the cot alike felt the fury of the plague. One king, two queens,* one bishop, and great numbers of other distinguished persons fell victims to it.

The whole period of time during which the Black Plague raged with destructive violence in Europe was (with the exception of Russia, where it did not break out until 1351), from 1347 to 1350, from this latter date to 1383 there were various pestilences, bad enough indeed, but not as violent as the Black Death.

* Alonso XI.; Johanna, Queen of Navarre, daughter of Louis X., and Johanna of Burgundy, wife of King Philip de Valois.

Ireland was much less heavily visited than England, and the disease seems scarcely to have reached the mountainous regions of that land ; and Scotland, too, would perhaps have remained free from it, had not the Scotch availed themselves of the discomfiture of the English, to make an irruption into England which terminated in the destruction of their army by the plague and the sword and the extension of the pestilence through those who escaped over the whole country.

In Sweden two princes died (Haken and Knut, half brothers of King Magnus), and in Westgothland alone 466 priests. The inhabitants of Iceland and Greenland found in the coldness of their inhospitable climes no protection against this enemy, which invaded them. In Denmark and Norway the people were so occupied with their own misery, that the accustomed voyages to Greenland ceased, and at the same time great icebergs formed on the coast of East Greenland, and no mortal from that time, even to the present day, has seen that shore or the former dwellers thereon.

It may be assumed that Europe lost by the Black Death some twenty-five millions of people, or about one-fourth of her inhabitants. That her nations could overcome, as quickly as they did, this terrible loss, without retrograding more than they did, is a most convincing proof of the indestructibility of human society as a whole.

THE DANCING MANIA.

The effects of the Black Death had not yet subsided, and the graves of millions of its victims were scarcely green when a strange delusion arose. It was a convulsion which in the most extraordinary manner infuriated the human frame and excited the astonishment of contemporaries for more than two centuries. It was called in some portions of Europe the Dance of St. John, or of St. Vitus, on account of the strange leaps by which it was characterized and which gave to those affected, while performing their wild dance and screaming and foaming with fury, all the appearance of persons possessed. It did not remain confined to particular localities, but was propagated by a sight of the sufferers over the whole of Europe.

As early as the year 1374 assemblages of men and women were seen at Aix-la-Chapelle who had come out from Germany, and, united by one common delusion, exhibited to the public, both in the streets and in the churches, the following strange spectacle : They formed circles, hand in hand, and losing all control over their senses continued, regardless of the bystanders, dancing for hours together in wild delirium, until at length they fell to the ground in a state of exhaustion. Then they complained of extreme oppression, and groaned as if in the agonies of death, until cloths were bound tightly around their waists, when they recovered and remained free from complaint until the next attack. This practice of swathing was resorted to on account of the tympany which followed these spasmodic ravings ; but the bystanders frequently relieved patients in a less artificial manner by thumping and trampling upon the parts affected. While dancing, they neither saw nor heard, being insensible to external impressions through the senses, but were haunted by visions, their fancies conjuring up spirits, whose names they shrieked out, and some of them afterward asserted they felt as if they had been immersed in a stream of blood which obliged them to leap so high. Others during the paroxysm saw the heavens open and the saints and Virgin Mary, according as the religious notions of the age were strangely and variously reflected in their imaginations. When the disease was completely developed, the attack began with epileptic convulsions. Those affected fell to the ground senseless, panting and laboring for breath. They foamed at the mouth, and, suddenly springing up, began their dance with strange contortions.

It was but a few months ere this disease had spread from Aix-la-Chapelle, where it appeared in July, over the neighboring Netherlands. In Liège, Utrecht, Tongres and many other towns the dancers appeared with garlands in their hair and their waists girt with cloth bandages, that they might, as soon as the paroxysm was over, receive immediate relief from the attack of tympany. This bandage, by the insertion of a stick, easily twisted tight. Many, however, obtained more relief from kicks and blows, which they found numbers of persons ready to administer, for wherever the dancers appeared the people assembled in crowds to gratify their curiosity with the frightful spectacle. Peasants left their ploughs, mechanics their workshops, housewives their domestic duties to join in the wild revels. Girls and boys quitted their parents, and servants their masters, to amuse themselves at the dances of those possessed and greedily imbibed the poison of mental aberration.

The priests and the authorities took an interest in the afflicted, who were numbered by thousands. They divided them into separate parties, to each of which they appointed responsible superintendents to protect them, and so sent them on pilgrimages to chapels and shrines, principally to those of St. Vitus, near Zabern and Rostreué, where priests were in attendance to work upon the misguided minds, and where it is probable that many were, through the influence of devotion, cured of this lamentable affliction.

Yet in most cases music afforded the sufferers relief. At the sound of the flute or zithern they awoke from their lethargy, opened their eyes, and moving slowly at first, according to the measure of the music, were, as the time quickened, gradually hurried on to a most passionate dance. Throughout the summer season, cities and villages resounded with the notes of musical instruments, and patients were everywhere met with who looked upon dancing as their only remedy.

There were, however, more ancient dancing plagues. In the year 1237 upwards of a hundred children were said to have been seized suddenly at Erfurt, and to have proceeded dancing and jumping along the road to Arnstadt. When they arrived at that place they fell exhausted to the ground, and, according to an old chronicle, many of them, after they were taken home to their parents, died, and the rest remained affected to the ends of their lives with a permanent tremor. Another occurrence is related to have taken place at the Mosel bridge at Utrecht in 1278, when two hundred fanatics began to dance, and would not desist when a priest passed by carrying the host to a person who was sick, upon which, as if in punishment, the bridge gave way and they were all drowned. A similar event is also said to have occurred as early as the year 1027. Eighteen peasants are said to have disturbed divine service on Christmas eve, by dancing and brawling in the churchyard, whereupon the priest inflicted a curse upon them that they should dance and scream a whole year without ceasing.

THE SWEATING SICKNESS.

After the fate of England had been decided by the Battle of Bosworth, on the 22d of August, 1485, the joy of the nation was clouded by a strange disease which, following in the rear of Henry's victorious army, spread in a few weeks from the distant mountains of Wales to the metropolis of the Empire. It was a violent inflammatory fever, which, after a short rigor, prostrated the powers as by a blow, and amid painful oppression of the stomach, headache and lethargic stupor, suffused the whole body with a fetid perspiration. All this took place in a few hours, and the crisis was always over within the space of a day and a night. The internal heat which the patient suffered was intolerable, yet every refrigerant was certain death.

At first the new foe was scarcely heeded; citizens and peasants went in joy-

ful procession to meet the victorious army, for the nation, after its many years of civil war, looked forward to happier days of peace. Very shortly, however, after the king's entry into the capital on the 28th of August, the Sweating Sickness, as the disease was called, began its ravages among the dense population of the city. Two lord mayors and six aldermen died within one week; many who had been in perfect health at night were on the following morning numbered with the dead. The disease for the most part marked for its victims robust and vigorous men, and as many noble families lost their chiefs, extensive commercial houses their principals, and wards their guardians, the festivities were soon changed into mourning and grief. By the end of the year the disease had spread over the whole of England. Many persons of rank, of the ecclesiastic and civil classes, became its victims, and great was the consternation when it broke out in Oxford. Professors and students fled in all directions, but death overtook many of them, and the University was deserted for six weeks. The accounts which have been handed down are very imperfect, but we may infer from the general grief and anxiety which prevailed, that the loss of life was very considerable.

Some twenty years afterward, in the summer of 1506, the Sweating Sickness visited England for a second time. The renewed eruption of the epidemic was not on this occasion connected with any important occurrence, so that contemporaries have not even mentioned the month when it began; and in the autumn it disappeared.

A third time, in 1517, the Sweating Sickness once more broke out, and was so violent and rapid in its course that it carried off those who were attacked in two or three hours, so that the first shivering fit was regarded as the commencement of certain death. Among the poorer classes the deaths were innumerable, and no precautions averted death from the houses of the rich. This time the Sweating Sickness lasted a full six months, and reached its greatest height about six weeks after its first appearance.

A heavier affliction, however, was yet in store. In May, 1528, the Sweating Sickness again broke out in England, and fourteen months later brought a scene of horror upon all the nations of northern Europe scarcely equaled during any other epidemic. It appeared at once with the same intensity it had shown before, was ushered in by no previous indications, and between health and death there lay but a brief term of five or six hours. Once or twice again this fearful epidemic visited localities in Europe, but by the autumn of 1551 it had vanished from the earth, never, it is hoped, to reappear again.

ARTHUR DUDLEY VINTON.

III.

PRESIDENT'S ENGLISH.

"THE Queen's English" is always distinguished by a certain stately modesty, which at once asserts the dignity of the office, and ignores the temporary occupant of it by assuming the plural or editorial form of statement—WE. Without adopting this peculiar method of self-abnegation of their personality, all of our Presidents, from Washington to Andrew Johnson, with the exception of Andrew Jackson, have been singularly modest in referring to themselves as individuals in their public utterances. Even Andrew Jackson, who was as vain as he was energetic, was modest when his public speech referred to his official action. Our present President, among his other pseudo reforms, can justly boast of himself and Andrew Johnson, *nous avons changé tout cela*. Cleveland has completed the work that Johnson began. He revels in a wealth of personal pronouns. "I," "my," "me" and "myself" pop up like Jack-in-the-boxes in almost every sentence he utters. His acceptance speech should be printed like a dissected map,